



Michigan's
Nonpoint Source
Program

Federal Clean Water Act
Nonpoint Source Grant
2010-0054

Manistee County Community Foundation

Telephone: (231) 723-7269

Contact Person: Laura Heintzelman

Project Website:

www.northernmichiganstreams.org/bearcreekws.asp

Email: mccf@manisteefoundation.org

Bear Creek Watershed Plan Update Project (Greater Bear Watershed Management Plan)

December 2010 through December 2013

The first Bear Creek Watershed Management Plan was completed in July 2000 by the Conservation Resource Alliance, Bear Creek Watershed Council, and other project partners. The continued success of cooperative planning and management efforts and growing concerns over potential impairments to Bear Lake led residents in the area to seek resources for a the development of a comprehensive watershed management plan that would update the Bear Creek Watershed Management Plan and expand the scope of the original plan to include the entire watershed, including Bear Lake. The purpose of the resulting Greater Bear Watershed Management Plan is to guide and inform the integration of future activities in the watershed to protect and enhance the valuable natural resources essential to the quality of life and economic well-being of the residents of the area.

The Greater Bear Watershed is located primarily in Manistee County, in the northwest portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, with very small portions extending into Benzie and Wexford counties. The watershed encompasses approximately 204 square miles, totaling 130,800 acres, and spanning across 13 townships and the villages of Bear Lake, Brethren, Copemish, and Kaleva. Included in the watershed are the 1,800 acre Bear Lake, Bear Creek, and a number of tributaries to Bear Creek. Bear Creek meanders some 20 miles southward across Manistee County before joining the Manistee River downstream of Tippy Dam.

Grant Amount: \$ 132,380

Match Funds: \$ 23,380

Total Amount: \$ 155,760

Project Goals:

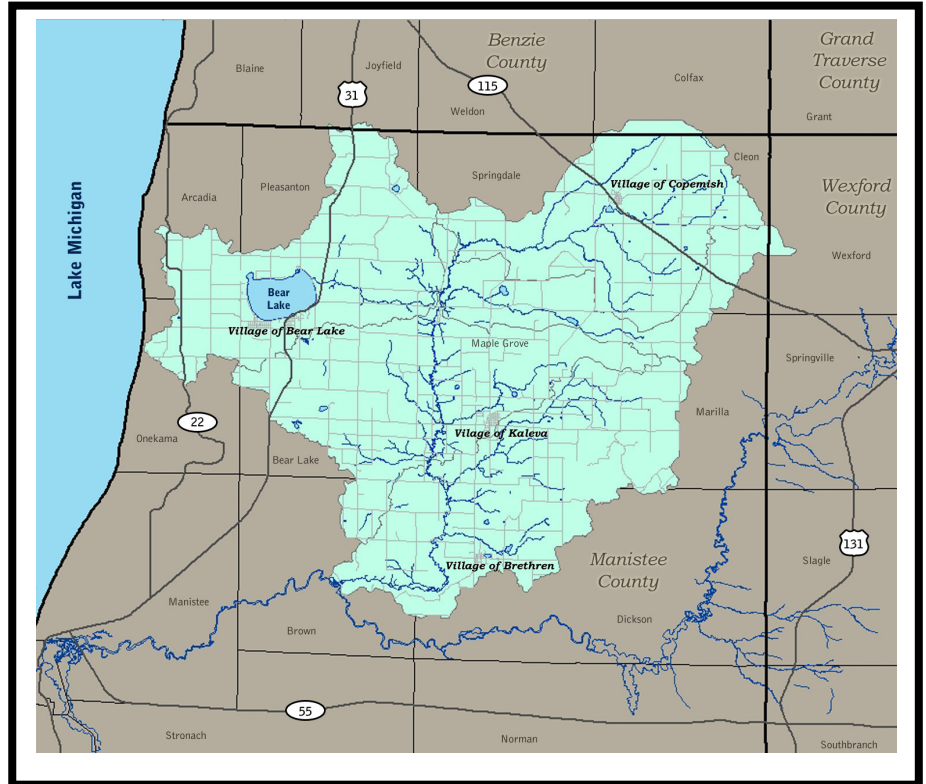
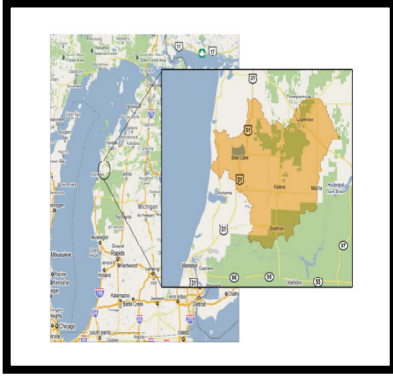
1. To update the existing Bear Creek Watershed Management Plan to include a comprehensive plan for Bear Lake and bring the entire plan into alignment with EPA and Clean Michigan Initiative criteria.
2. To build watershed stewardship and engage the public through social monitoring and public education efforts.

Partners involved:

- Bear Creek Watershed Council
- Bear Lake Watershed Alliance
- Bear Lake Property Owners Association
- Manistee County Planning Department
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- U.S. Forest Service
- MDEQ Water Resources Division
- MDNR Fisheries Division
- Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
- Conservation Resource Alliance
- Spirit of the Woods Conservation Club
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Northwest Michigan Council of Governments
- Schmidt Outfitters
- Alliance for Economic Success
- Manistee County Community Foundation
- Public Sector Consultants



January 2014



Key Accomplishments and Products

- The Greater Bear Watershed Management Plan, encompassing the entire Bear Creek Watershed and including Bear Lake, was approved by MDEQ on July 25, 2013, for meeting criteria for the State Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) Nonpoint Source Pollution Control program and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Section 319 Program of the federal Clean Waters Act.
- The project built stewardship and engaged the public through a number of efforts which included; outreach to local units of government and planning departments; conducting a social monitoring survey; holding several meetings throughout the planning process which were well-attended by the public; the development and institutionalization of a project website; and efforts to educate the public about conservation easements to protect the watershed in perpetuity.
- Additionally, efforts to educate stakeholders and the public about options for philanthropic giving in support of the watershed resulted in the establishment of the Bear Creek Watershed Alliance Fund, a permanent endowment established at the Manistee County Community Foundation to further their organization's mission and role as a key partner in the implementation of the Greater Bear Watershed Management Plan.

Other Activities: (Concurrent with, but not funded by the grant):

- First annual Bear Lake Watershed Alliance fund raiser and watershed awareness dinner.
- Participation in local festivals, raising awareness and participation.
- Involvement of local high school students in watershed education.
- Local sportsman's club assisted with information distribution and hosted a public meeting
- Partnership between District Health Department and Bear Lake Property owners for surface water sampling.